

## The anti-imperialist front and the Arab liberation movement

*Nicolas Chaoui*  
General Secretary,  
CC Lebanese CP

The historic contention between the forces of progress and socialism and the forces of reaction and imperialism has never been as sharp as in our time. It embraces all parts of the world and affects all the essential spheres of human life. And acting in alliance with the socialist world system and the working class in the capitalist countries, the national liberation movement is playing an increasingly prominent part in it.

Although most of the countries have won political independence, the battle is far from over. Some peoples are still in colonial slavery and fighting heroically for freedom. Many of the states that won political independence in the past 30 years, are still economically dominated – in some cases almost completely – by foreign monopoly. The abyss between the socio-economic conditions of the newly-free countries and their former metropolitan and other developed capitalist countries, is growing wider. Imperialism banks on reaction, collusion with the feudal elements, and the still surviving remnants of the colonial system to obstruct the development of the newly-free countries and prevent the final elimination of archaic social institutions.

Though important and necessary, political independence by itself does not totally eliminate imperialist domination. It only opens a new stage and favorable opportunities – if used correctly – for continuing the liberation struggle. This is why the anti-imperialist character of all liberation movements is now more pronounced, bearing out Lenin's prediction that 'the socialist revolution will not be solely, or chiefly, a struggle of the revolutionary proletarians in each country against their bourgeoisie – no, it will be a struggle of all the imperialist-oppressed colonies and countries, of all dependent countries, against international imperialism' (Vol. 30, p. 159).

The conquest of political independence by countries of the Arab East, essentially after the second world war, was also a victory for all progressives of the world. But the bloc of feudal lords and upper

bourgeoisie that assumed power, its policy of securing the interests of the exploiting classes, slowed up economic liberation. The economies of Arab countries were still largely hitched to the imperialist economy. As before, feudal and semi-feudal relations predominated, impeding the battle against the backwardness inherited from the many centuries of feudal Ottoman rule and the subsequent colonial period. The laboring masses refused to suffer this situation. They continued their struggle, and gave it increasingly a democratic class content. They showed their determination to resist the designs of imperialism, which tried to saddle them with unequal military and economic agreements, and worked to eliminate the positions of foreign monopolies, for the repossession by the state of the national natural wealth, and for an agrarian reform. This brought about a break between the popular masses and the bloc of feudals and the upper bourgeoisie. The social complexion of the mass struggle changed completely. The Arab liberation movement acquired a new, progressive content. Its anti-imperialist orientation became more tangible. It rose to a higher level than that of the period of struggle for political independence, and became part of the world anti-imperialist front.

Today, the Arab liberation movement is centered on general democratic objectives. The Program of the Lebanese CP, adopted by the Party's Second Congress in 1968, defined the following tasks for the newly-independent states in their bid for economic liberation from imperialism and imperialist monopoly:

'elimination of the remnants of the colonial regime and of the positions of foreign capital;

'elimination of feudal and semi-feudal relations, which impede growth of the productive forces in agriculture; solution of the agrarian problem through reform in the interests of the poor peasants and farm laborers, thus assuring the development of modern advanced agriculture;

'industrialization as the principal means of altering the one-sided colonial economic structure;

'overcoming the chronic backwardness in science, technology and culture; elimination of illiteracy and continuous concern for the production of skilled national personnel; protection and development of national culture;

'democratization of political and public life, political enlightenment of the masses, development of their political consciousness; participation of mass organizations in building the future of their countries;

'active cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; elimination of all discrimination in international economic and commercial relations.'

Developments show, however, that the national liberation struggle

inevitably transcends the framework of general democratic objectives. The still considerable influence of the feudal lords and upper bourgeoisie, who take the cue from imperialism, is the main obstacle to combating backwardness and assuring the national rebirth of the Arab countries. Yet these classes suffer frequent political crises. Their positions have been weakened. The economic, social and class contradictions have become sharper. The economic, social and cultural successes of the socialist countries, coupled with the persevering efforts of the Arab Communist parties and Marxist groups, have added to the popularity of socialist ideas. The peoples in the newly-free countries are beginning to understand that it is difficult, even impossible, to assure national revival through capitalist development. This bears out Lenin's prediction that the movement of the majority of the world population, initially oriented on national liberation, would ultimately turn against capitalism and imperialism. The advance to this higher level is, in fact, a measure of the national liberation movement's objectively growing contribution to the world revolutionary process.

The revolutionary development of the Arab countries is anything but smooth. As we said in the documents of our Party's Third Congress (1972), it does not follow any established or immutable pattern. This is due mainly to the appalling economic backwardness, typical in varying degrees of all Arab lands, the multiplicity of modes of production, and the exceedingly complex social, tribal, religious and communal structure of our society. The class structure and the relationship of classes and social groups are highly specific. Peasants make up the bulk of the population. The urban small and middle bourgeoisie is also numerous, while the working class is, as a rule, small and insufficiently organized; in most cases, its class consciousness is of a relatively low order (due to its recent rural origins and continuing close bonds with the village).

In most of the Arab countries the struggle for political independence was led by the young national bourgeoisie and its political representatives (frequently including a few feudal lords). But after independent states came into being, it was classes and social groups related to the new progressive social tendencies – the mass of workers and peasants, and the revolutionary sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia – that became the core and motive force of the liberation movement. In most cases, the movement is led by revolutionary democrats of a petty-bourgeois or intellectual background. Anti-imperialist regimes have taken over in some Arab countries, following a progressive course and taking social and economic measures objectively hostile to capitalism and impeding its development.

These regimes, our Party Program notes, are headed by the revolutionary section of the petty bourgeoisie. But a long and intricate period of differentiation was involved, coupled with an overt and covert struggle against the big bourgeoisie and the conservative and reactionary wing of the petty bourgeoisie and middle strata, before this could come about. Most of the economic and social measures of the revolutionary democrats conform with the interests of workers, peasants and the progressive sections of the petty bourgeoisie. Conversely, they are prejudicial to the interests of foreign monopoly, the feudals and the big bourgeoisie. And all this in countries where the working class is virtually not represented in the leadership.

Yet the predominant influence of the petty bourgeoisie, along with the fact that power is almost exclusively controlled by revolutionary democrats, accentuates the dual and conflicting nature of this socio-political group. A bitter struggle is under way within the ruling element, affecting the political, economic and social situation in the Arab countries. Hostile foreign forces are taking advantage of the situation and trying to make the internal political clashes still more acute.

The main purpose of Israel's imperialist aggression in 1967, for example, was to strike at the Arab national liberation movement and slow up or, if possible, reverse the progressive tendencies. It was designed to weaken the Arab progressive forces, slake Israel's thirst for territorial acquisition, 'resolve' the problem of the Arab people of Palestine to suit the wishes of Tel Aviv and world imperialism, and disrupt the Arab-Soviet friendship.

Today, imperialism nourishes the same aims. Supporting Israel lock, stock and barrel, and providing it various military aid for its aggression, the United States is engineering political maneuvers calculated to recover and strengthen its own and its agents' positions in the Arab East. These U.S. moves have been particularly intensive since the October war. The United States is going out of its way to prevail on some Arab countries, especially those lacking firmness in their anti-imperialist policy, to make concessions; it is trying to divert them from the progressive course, disrupt the unity of the progressive Arab forces, prejudice the Palestinian struggle and the Arab-Soviet friendship, and fortify the economic, political and military positions of U.S. imperialism.

The instability of petty-bourgeois leaders, their limited ideological platform and the inconsistency of their socio-political and economic policy, are a key factor behind the sharp political situation in the Arab world. As a result, candidly rightist trends have reappeared in some countries, with a political line distinctly out of gear with the present level of the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and home reaction. This has given impulse to a dangerous penetration into the state ap-



paratus of reactionary elements and groups. They are working astutely to gain control of the state machine with the aim of reversing the socio-economic, political and cultural gains of the preceding period.

These reactionary elements and groups make the most of the setbacks and failings of some progressive regimes, of rightward tendencies and the accompanying mistrust of the popular masses, especially the working class, hostility to democracy, and of the prevailing anti-communism and anti-Sovietism. They strike up alliances with the bureaucracy spawned by these regimes, which has lined its pockets at the expense of the state sector and government contracts (no mean source of profit for the private capitalist sector as well). This tends to revive the forces seeking to discredit the socialist orientation, usurp power and reverse the course of events in order to assure the socio-economic and political interests of classes that had but recently been strongly disabled. Such political trends at home are accompanied by a search for new allies abroad, first and foremost the United States.

In sum, when the narrow class interests of petty-bourgeois leaders come into collision with the objective needs of society, they cease to be revolutionary democrats and champions of the broad petty-bourgeois strata and the laboring masses.

Some quarters use the positive results of the just October war against Israeli aggression and occupation, and the patriotic uplift touched off by that war (which compelled even reactionary governments and forces known for their collusion with imperialism, to go along with using the oil 'weapon'), to vindicate their rightist policy. They incite narrow nationalist sentiments, and advocate class peace and concessions to reaction. More, they try to pervert the important changes in the world situation that paved the way to détente after the long period of cold war, unbridled arming and aggressive imperialist military blocs, by claiming that détente and peaceful coexistence, and in particular the Soviet-American agreements, amount to 'collusion' by two 'superpowers.' This, they aver, justifies their departure from the revolutionary standpoint of the national liberation movement, and the abandonment of important national and social achievements.

However, this political line is encountering strong opposition within separate countries and by the Arab national liberation movement as a whole. In some countries, the sharp contradictions stemming from the movement's leadership crisis have stimulated the class struggle to an unprecedented degree. The rightists are compelled to maneuver. Their policy is made inconsistent by their dread of an open confrontation with the popular masses, who are reluctant to give up their political, economic and social gains, and among whom anti-imperialist, especially anti-American, feeling runs very high.

But dangerous though they are, and pernicious though their consequences may be, it is not the reviving rightist tendencies, not the tendencies to move away from past achievements, that are determinative. The main thing is that the Arab national liberation movement has achieved tremendous positive results in recent years. Take the question of oil. The complete or partial nationalization of foreign oil interests in Iraq, Algeria and Libya is a most important gain in the grim anti-imperialist struggle for economic liberation.

Several Arab countries are taking further progressive steps in the political power sphere, forming alliances and patriotic fronts that include Communists, and strengthening and expanding cooperation with countries of the socialist community. Influential sections of the Arab liberation movement have discarded their phobias about the Soviet Union and are moving away from anti-communism. Progressive trends are crystallizing in certain sections of the movement, such as the Palestine resistance.

In this setting of contradictions and the resulting intricate collisions, the masses are shaking off many of their old-time illusions and erroneous notions about some of the social strata and political forces that profess to represent their interests, and also about the perspective of social development. These are supplanted by more realistic ideas attuned to the course of historical development and opening new perspectives.

Conscious of the need for the national liberation movement to grow, and to deepen its progressive content, the working class and its allies are steadily gaining political prominence. The role of the Communist parties, too, has become greater in the Arab East, where Communists have always been the staunchest fighters against imperialism, and for social progress, socialism and Arab unity. In recent years, the Communist parties in the Arab countries have gained firmer ideological, political and organizational positions, have built up a mass base, and closer ties with other anti-imperialist forces and progressive non-communist parties.

The Communists were the first to spread socialist ideas in the Arab East and to hold up the idea of friendship with the Soviet Union, which, they knew, assured the success of our struggle for liberation, progress and unity. Now, this is acknowledged by the vast majority in our countries.

The Arab national liberation movement, the modern stage of which began with the historic triumph of the Great October Socialist Revolution, gained its initial victories as a result of fascism's defeat in the second world war. In 1943, when the Soviet Union was delivering blow after blow to the fascist beast, France and Britain were compelled to recognize the independence of Syria and Lebanon. And in 1946,

Soviet backing in the UN Security Council of Syrian and Lebanese demands made the two powers also evacuate their troops.

In almost every case, the independence of Arab countries is connected with Soviet support. The memory of Suez is still fresh in our minds. We know that it had been Soviet support that opened the way for our political victory over the tripartite aggression. It is also thanks to the versatile Soviet aid that the Arabs were able to stand their ground after the June war of 1967. And without the firm Soviet stand, the October war, too, would hardly have yielded the well-known results. The victories over imperialism and Zionism, the battles we have won against them, are an epitome of Arab-Soviet friendship.

The fact that after independence the Arabs were able to make major political, economic and social gains is also traceable to their military, political and economic cooperation with the socialist world. If the Soviet Union and other socialist countries had not stood by the Arabs, they would not have succeeded in wresting their natural wealth from imperialist monopoly control, in nationalizing their oil, or sharing in its extraction. Dams, hundreds of factories and other economic projects paving the way out of backwardness, are striking proof of the advantages of the alliance with the socialist world system, and a compelling argument for strengthening that alliance.

How inadequate, in the light of this, are the fabrications of the right wing of the national liberation movement, which tries to justify its concessions to imperialism and departures from progressive gains with references to the international détente imposed on the imperialists by the growing might of the socialist community and the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples. The real facts expose these specious efforts. Peoples in different parts of the world have scored victories in the conditions of détente. The giant class battles in France and Italy are evidence of a substantial swing to the left. Europe's oldest fascist dictatorship has fallen in Portugal, and democracy is being revived. This is largely due to the heroic struggle of the peoples of the Portuguese colonies. And the day is near when they will at last taste its fruits and gain independence.

The April 1974 meeting of our Central Committee pointed out that 'the international détente does not mean that the contradictions between socialism and capitalism have disappeared, that the class struggle on the international arena has ended or that unfavorable conditions have arisen for the national liberation movement. On the contrary, the détente in international relations is helping to dampen the aggressive nature of imperialism and provides the national liberation movement with more favorable conditions for extending the struggle against imperialism and its puppets, delivering new blows, and achieving important gains in different fields.'

Isolation is sure to become the lot of those who are sowing doubts about the alliance of the Arab national liberation movement with the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist community. The Communists are not alone in repulsing them, and are supported by the popular masses. More, in many Arab lands ruling quarters with a realistic outlook are calling for closer cooperation with the Soviet Union as the essential condition for the successful solution of national, economic and social problems. This is borne out by the recent visits to the Soviet Union of Hafez al-Assad, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, and Abdel Jalloud, Prime Minister of the Libyan Arab Republic. Kamal Joumblat, the eminent Lebanese political leader, too, emphasized that the Arab countries must cherish their friendship with the Soviet Union, and rely on its aid and support, without which it is impossible to force the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli troops from all occupied territories, assure the lawful rights of the Palestinian people, and realize the Arab aspirations to freedom and progress.

It is not simple for the rightists to liquidate the changes accomplished in some of the Arab countries or the gains of the Arab liberation movement as a whole. The processes in the Arab world are historically irreversible in character, because they are tied in with the real interests and needs of the entire society. And the objective logic of preserving, developing and consolidating the available gains requires still closer alliance and cooperation with the socialist world system.

Recent events have borne out the importance and necessity of cementing the unity of the three great forces of our time – the socialist world system, the international working class, and the national liberation movement – for successful struggle against imperialism and reaction. They have thus also borne out the basic conclusion drawn by the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in 1969.

They showed, furthermore, that national liberation movements develop in the mainstream of the world revolutionary process, together with its other constituents, the socialist world system and the international working-class movement. The outcome of every national liberation revolution is linked with the world revolutionary process: any decline in solidarity with it may cause loss of progressive gains and subjection to imperialism, while stronger solidarity leads to new achievements and victories.